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The influence of mindfulness in attention based tasks.

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Alana Brandy Marshall

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Abstract

Mindfulness, defined as the self-regulation of attention so that it is maintained on immediate experience, has demonstrated clinical efficacy for the treatment of a diverse range of mental and physical health concerns. This study sought firstly, to determine whether the mindfulness attention awareness scale (MAAS) developed by Brown and Ryan (2003) in America would be applicable for use with an adult sample in New Zealand. Secondly, this study investigated whether mindfulness, as measured by the MAAS, could be linked to enhanced attentional processing using attentional paradigms from cognitive psychology, including inattention blindness (IB) and change blindness (CB) tasks. The results support the use of the MAAS with adults in New Zealand. The results also show that participants in the high mindfulness group detected the unexpected event in the IB task and reported changes in the CB task significantly more often than participants in the low mindfulness group. This finding provides support for the prediction that mindfulness and the MAAS would be associated with improvements in sustained attention and switching, in addition to facilitating the identification of objects in unexpected contexts. The results suggest the use and development of mindfulness as a tool to enhance attentional processing for a variety of psychotherapy, occupational, and sporting processes. The discussion considers these issues along with some reservations regarding the use of the MAAS, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

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This research was conducted in accordance with Massey University's human ethics guidelines.

* School of Psychology, Massey University, Albany and Palmerston North.

Contents

Page No.	Section
1 - 15	Introduction.
16 - 21	Method.
22 - 24	Results.
25 - 34	Discussion.
35 - 43	References.
44 - 52	Appendices.
	1 – MAAS.
	2 – Standardised Instructions.
	3 – Information Sheet.
	4 – Consent Form.
	5 – Demographic Questionnaire.
	6 – Mindfulness Flyer.